

Thank you all. Let's go in here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:12 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Cyprus

December 17, 2001

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Chairman:)

In accordance with Public Law 95-384 (22 U.S.C. 2373(c)), I submit to you this report on progress toward a negotiated solution of the Cyprus question covering the period October 1 through November 30, 2001. The previous submission covered August 1 through September 30, 2001. The United Nations continued in its efforts to sustain the proximity talks that started in December 1999. The United States remains committed to the United Nations effort to find a just and lasting settlement to the Cyprus problem.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 18.

Statement on Congressional Action on Education Reform Legislation

December 18, 2001

I commend Members of Congress for acting boldly and in an overwhelmingly bipartisan way to help make sure no child in America is left behind. These historic reforms will improve our public schools by creating an environment where every child can learn through real accountability, unprecedented flexibility for States and school districts, greater local control, more options for parents, and more funding for what works.

Many share in the credit for making these reforms a reality. I look forward to standing side by side with the bipartisan leadership,

Congressman Boehner, Senator Kennedy, Senator Gregg, and Congressman Miller, early next year and signing these important reforms into law.

By putting aside partisan differences and working to find common ground, we can get things done so that all our children have the opportunity for a better and brighter future.

Statement on Signing the Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2002

December 18, 2001

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2299, the "Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2002."

I appreciate the bipartisan effort that has gone into producing this Act. The bill abides by the agreed upon aggregate funding level for Fiscal Year 2002 of \$686 billion and supports several of my Administration's key initiatives with:

- \$140 million for border safety to ensure an open border for trade between the United States and Mexico through the establishment of an inspection and certification system that will ensure a high level of motor carrier safety;
- \$5 billion for Coast Guard operations and capital expenses, including \$243 million to support expanded drug interdiction efforts as authorized in the Western Hemisphere Drug Elimination Act;
- \$1.2 billion for the newly created Transportation Security Administration to enhance airport and aircraft security;
- \$32.8 billion for key highway infrastructure and safety initiatives in compliance with authorized levels;
- \$10.2 billion for aviation operations and airport improvement grants to expand safety, security, and capacity; and
- \$6.7 billion for mass transit grants and capital programs.

Several provisions in the bill purport to require congressional approval before executive branch execution of aspects of the bill. I will interpret such provisions to require notification only, since any other interpretation